

The Overshadowing Issue

In a recent issue, the New York Sun printed an editorial in which it was said:

"The Colorado dynamite atrocity puts the real issue before the American people. It is the first and foremost issue now and until it is determined. Even the horror of this special instance and the general principle that crime must be punished and anarchy be put down at any cost in Colorado or elsewhere are but incidental to the main question. That main question, that overshadowing issue, is free labor, the right of the American citizen in any department of lawful industry to sell his work at such price as he is content to accept for it, and to be protected to the fullest extent of the powers of government and the sentiment of society in the unrestricted exercise of his right."

Commenting upon the New York Sun's statement, the Omaha World-Herald printed an editorial that should be read by every American citizen. The World-Herald said:

Of course, the Sun is a partisan of the mine owners and in its view the mine owners are right, while the union mine workers are wrong; but the situation presented by present-day Colorado conditions is so grave that it will be well for the thoughtful citizen to seek an unbiased view. This is so not only because it is at all times desirable to seek the truth, but for the further reason that even though we accept as correct the partisan statement of either side to the Colorado controversy, the American people cannot adopt the Colorado example, nor can they afford to neglect the opportunity to place their condemnation upon it.

Every intelligent man must condemn the "dynamite atrocity," and for the purpose of placing before the people the overshadowing issue—not the "overshadowing issue" exactly as the Sun puts it—but the issue as all patriotic men should understand it, we are indebted to the Sun for its intelligent discrimination in saying: "Even the horror of this special instance and the general principle that crime must be punished and anarchy must be put down at any cost in Colorado or elsewhere are but incidental to the main question."

We are all agreed that the dynamiting of the Independence depot was an outrage. We must all hope that the perpetrators of that outrage will be speedily brought to justice. Upon such a question there can be no division among patriotic men. But even after thus clearing the atmosphere of thought the Sun itself beclouds the atmosphere when it undertakes to say that "the overshadowing issue is free labor." It is true the American citizen has the right to sell his work in any department of lawful industry at such prices as he is content to accept for it. It is also true that any em-

ployer has the right to employ whomsoever he chooses to employ in any department of lawful industry. And whether it be employer or employee, he is entitled to be protected in the unrestricted exercise of his right, to the fullest extent of the powers of government. It may be added that experience justifies the opinion that he will be protected in those rights as far as concerns the "sentiment of society."

The New York Sun and those who follow in its wake pretend to stand for these principles; but do they really stand for them?

When the union man in Colorado protests against the employment of what he calls "scab labor" the Sun insists upon what it calls the rights of "free labor" and says there must be no interference with it. When a mine owner in Colorado chooses to employ non-union labor and insists upon his right to do so, the Sun rushes to his defense and maintains that all the powers of government should be exercised to uphold the mine owner in that right.

But when the owners of the Portland mine, preferring to operate their establishment with union labor, undertook to pursue the even tenor of their way, the Colorado authorities called a halt, shut down the Portland mine and denied to the owners of that concern the privilege of employing whomsoever they choose to employ; and what does the New York Sun say about this? Where, then, is the great and mighty principle of "free labor," to which the Sun is so thoroughly devoted? In the opinion of the Sun and those whom it leads it was anarchy for union laborers to protest when some of the mine owners put to work non-union men; but when the Colorado authorities closed down the Portland mine because its owners chose to operate that mine with union labor, that was not anarchy; that was patriotism; that was law and order; that was the fulfillment of righteousness in the "overshadowing issue!"

In the effort to locate the overshadowing issue, not as a partisan would have it, but as the patriotic citizen must determine it, let us take a careful look at the situation.

The Colorado strike grows out of the persistent campaign waged by the workingmen of Colorado for an eight-hour day.

In 1899, as a result of this agitation, the Colorado legislature enacted an eight-hour law. The smelter trust and the mine owners objected to the enforcement of this law and attacked it by judicial process, carrying their fight to the supreme court of the state, where the law was finally held to be unconstitutional.

The workingmen then began agitation for a constitutional amendment on this line.

Two years ago a proposed constitutional amendment providing for the eight-hour law, and requiring also that the legislature enact a statute to carry the amendment into effect was submitted to the conventions of the several political parties in Colorado. That proposed amendment was indorsed by the republican convention, as well as by the conventions of other political parties; it was submitted to the people and was adopted by a majority of more than 46,000.

When the legislature met following the election at which this proposed amendment had been adopted the smelter trust and the mine owners sent powerful lobbies for the purpose of preventing any legislation in line with the decree registered by the people at the polls.

The result was the legislature ad-

journing without passing any law to make this constitutional amendment effective.

Is it possible that one may undertake to locate the overshadowing issue without giving some consideration to the fact that the will of the people of Colorado, registered in an orderly way at the polls, was throttled by a great corporation lobby, and through means with which corporation lobbies are familiar?

Is it possible that in the effort to locate the overshadowing issue one must keep his eyes fixed upon the things done and the things alleged to have been done by the poor wretches who, working from morning until night for a bare existence, struggle to improve their condition to the extent that they may obtain an eight-hour day, which has now come to be fixed as the reasonable workday in the minds of thoughtful men? Is it possible that these eyes must be closed to the things done and the things said to have been done by the Colorado authorities who, while pretending to be engaged in upholding law and order, have become not only partisans to one side of the controversy, but have become oppressors of their opponents?

When we charge that union leaders have attacked non-union men, shall we close our eyes to the fact that the recognized representatives of Colorado authority have required men elected to civil offices to surrender their commissions, in one instance, at least, by the threat of hanging, and in many other instances at the point of the bayonet?

When we charge that non-union men have been intimidated by union laborers, shall we close our eyes to the fact that the representatives of Colorado authority have driven merchants from business, have forced property owners and reputable citizens having no affiliation with the union to leave their homes, all because these people had confessed, in the presence of military authority, that in the contest between employer and employee their sympathies were with the latter?

When we charge that the union laborers have violated the law in every conceivable way, shall we close our eyes to the fact that the representatives of Colorado authority have deported men by the hundreds, leaving them outcast upon the bleak prairies without food or water?

When we charge that the union laborers have not proceeded to obtain their rights in an orderly way, shall we close our eyes to the fact that the representatives of Colorado authority have carried on their proceedings in a disorderly way?

Do not these reflections tend to bring us to a better understanding of what the overshadowing issue really is?

Mr. McClelland, judge advocate of the Colorado militia, stated the overshadowing issue much better than the New York Sun does when he said: "To hell with the constitution!"

Under the constitution and in accordance with American principles, the Peabody government of Colorado, operated as it is to the partisan advantage of the mine owners and trust magnates who corrupted the Colorado legislature, is an official mob. Those who are so ready to condemn every lawless act charged to the Colorado workingman, while they have nothing but praise for the lawless acts attributed to the Colorado authorities, should pause and consider whether the greatest danger to society lies in the unofficial mob that may be readily put down by the strong arm of the law, or in the official mob composed of strong and determined men representing, for the moment, the authority of the commonwealth, but acting as partisan guards for one of the parties to a great controversy.

The overshadowing issue is the maintenance of law and order and the

adherence by all men to the spirit of our government.

In this view the employer may employ whomsoever he chooses; and no one may by force prevent him from so doing. The workingman may unite his fortunes with his fellows and may sell his labor to whomsoever he chooses; or preferring not to associate with his fellows, he may sell his labor to whomsoever chooses to purchase it; whether he be union or non-union, he has the right to dispose of his labor; and no one may by force prevent him from so doing. Men elected to civil offices may not have their commissions wrested from them by threats of violence, even though the threats come from military authority; if they have done things they should not have done, an orderly proceeding is provided for their removal or punishment. Men may not be driven from their homes because of their sympathies with one or the other side of a controversy. Workingmen may not be deported and driven from pillar to post simply because the drivers are armed with bayonets and are acting, for the moment, under the authority of the state; if they have been guilty of crime, the law provides methods for proceeding against them. The governor of a state is not the agent of powerful private interests; he is the agent of the people. The legislature is not a tool of great corporations; it is chosen to serve the people and to protect public interests.

The overshadowing issue is, indeed, the maintenance of law and order; not only the enforcement of the law and order of the statute books against the

\$75 Month and expenses; no experience needed; position permanent; self seller. PEASE MFG. CO., Stat'n 69, Cincinnati, O.

Subscribers' Advertising Department

A little thought will convince that this department of The Commoner offers superior advantages to those who desire to secure publicity. Only Commoner subscribers are allowed to use it, and only responsible articles are allowed to be advertised. Confidence in the advertising management will explain in large measure why advertising in The Commoner is profitable. The manager is in receipt of many letters from advertisers who have used this department with profit. The rate is the lowest made in this publication—6 cents per word per insertion, payable in advance. Address all orders to The Commoner, Lincoln, Nebraska.

THE LITTLE HOTEL WILMOT, SOUTH PENN Square, Philadelphia, is now one-third larger than formerly; the new addition provides commodious smoking and writing rooms and other conveniences. Just a step from the Pennsylvania Ry. Station. A good room for \$1.00. The Ryerson W. Jennings Co.

EASTERN KANSAS FARMS 40 MILES SOUTH of Kansas City; old settled tame grass country; Parker State Bank, Parker (Linn Co.) Kansas.

ORDER YOUR CAMPAIGN AND ADVERTISING photo buttons of E. R. Cox, Lake Linden, Mich.

FOR SALE 150 HEAD UNBROKEN horses, for particulars write, J. A. Caldwell, Gladstone, N. D.

SYSTEM REMEDY REMOVES CAUSE OF indigestion, rheumatism, kidney trouble, immediate effect. Stamp. T. E. Moore, Lexington, Ky.

OKLAHOMA FARM FOR SALE, 240 ACRES 3 1/4 miles of county seat and Railway Division, 45 in cultivation, 220 tillable, balance timber and pasture, finest water 10 feet. Price \$2,400 part time. Tom Donnellan, Woodward, Okla.

PHYSICIAN'S PROPERTY FOR SALE. "East Texas Fruit Belt". Address C care of Commoner, Lincoln, Neb.

FOR SALE AT A BARGAIN, GOOD RENTING property in Great Falls, Mont. Address Box 39, Millford, Utah.

YOU COULD SELL OLD LINE LIFE INSURANCE if you knew how. We teach the art free of charge and pay you for your time. Desirable contracts awaiting special and general agents for the states of Iowa, Missouri, Nebraska and Kansas. Address L, care of Commoner

Heart Disease

may be cured by strengthening the heart nerves, enriching the blood and improving the circulation with Dr. Miles' Heart Cure. Safe and sure. Sold on guarantee. Send postal for free book on diseases of the heart and nerves today. DR. MILES MEDICAL CO., Elkhart, Ind.